2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

ancestor Tɛŋənbulɔg—Earth-begotten—and give the same myth of his origin. The people of Degal and of Ka'ar attribute a similar origin to their first ancestors. Tɛndaan Gɛnɔt is said to have begotten Dagbeog (Bearded man) whose descendants are the Gbeog people, who are therefore a 'brother' lineage to Gbizug (=*Gbeog zug*, the upper part of Gbeog).

One of Gɛnɔt's 'brothers'—the exact genealogical relationship is regarded as of no consequence, some describing him as *soog* (uterine kinsman), others as *pit* (younger brother)—was Daziug (Red man), a hunter who founded the Ba'at-Sakpar line; and another 'brother' of his founded one of the Zubiuŋ lineages. Indeed all the primordial tɛndaanas were 'brothers' in a more general sense, the concepts of kinship serving here consciously to identify them with one another.

These myths, meagre as they appear, are laid down with a finality of conviction that makes any question of their historical truthfulness irrelevant.

Most of the Hill Talis are also alleged to have been immigrants originally who arrived to find the Degal Tɛndaana living on top of the hills. But their myths of origin are as deficient in circumstantial detail as those of the primordial tɛndaanas. Thus candid people at Yinduuri said complacently: 'We don't know, it is said that our ancestor came from Tampolɔŋ in Mampurugu, but now we have all become Talis.' People of other clans told a vague story of an ancestor wandering about the uninhabited hills, sheltering in caves, until one day he observed the smoke of a fire. Going towards it he discovered the Degal tɛndaana, and later settled on the Hills. Gorogo is said to have been founded thus by Woolisi immigrants, Sii by Bulisi and Mamprusi, and some of the Tɛnzugu lineages by Mamprusi, Kusaasi, or Gɔrisi. The origins thus attributed to any community symbolize special ritual relationships with the areas they are alleged to have migrated from, which are still maintained.

All these myths of origin become intelligible when it is realized that they are nothing more than formulations of the contemporary scheme of political and ceremonial relationships. The Tallensi themselves are philosophers enough to appreciate this. Many Namoos, for example, privately view the myth of the primordial tɛndaanas with unaffected scorn. 'They lie', declared Saɣəbazaa, a shrewd and respected elder of Tongo, himself a kinsman of the present[1] Gbizug tɛndaana. 'A human being can't emerge sprouting out of the earth. The rain falls, and the millet comes up, trees come up, grass comes up; but we have never seen a human being sprout up.' When I tried to defend the tɛndaanas, he countered triumphantly: 'And if their ancestor really sprouted up, why don't they let a person sprout again?' Then, with a sudden inspiration he proposed an explanation: 'Suppose you come and settle here and your children succeed you, and their children, and their children succeed and so on, and so on. Then, one day strangers come and ask your descendants whence they have sprung. Will they not say that their ancestor was begotten of the earth? We Namoos', he concluded, 'are immigrants (*kpeeha*) here.' This acute estimation of the myths gives a clue to their

[1] The present time throughout this book refers to the years 1934–7.

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

ideological significance as a counterweight to the Mosuor legend and as a dogma of prior habitation.

In the Sie district the Sawalɔg people, whose political and ceremonial relations with the Sie Namoos are exactly parallel to those of Gbizug with Tongo, also declare that their ancestor came into being miraculously, self-generated. In the identical phraseology of the people of Gbizug and Wakii, they say, 'Our ancestor descended from Heaven', or 'Our ancestor sprouted from the earth'. I once challenged the clan-head of Sawalɔg to prove how this was possible. His answer, shrewdly rationalistic, deserves to be recorded. 'We have not heard that our ancestor came from any other land. We have no other land to return to as the Sie people (immigrant Namoos) have. If they desecrate (*sayəm*, lit. spoil) the land here, they return to their (original) land yonder (at Tongo). That is why we say that we have descended from Heaven'—an interpretation which coincides with that of Sayəbazaa, the Namoo.

The covenant between Mosuor and Tɛndaan Gɛnət, again, accords well with a myth which is but a projection into the unchallengeable past of the present-day relationships between Gbizug and Tongo. The amorphous and unstandardized myths of origin with which the Hill Talis are satisfied symbolize the remarkable social integration they had achieved before their subjugation by the British in 1911. For nowadays the Hill Talis are rent by factions and by an intestine struggle for power amongst the various ritual office-holders. Rival claims are validated by citing established custom, by appealing to the memories of men, or, in the last resort, by the fabrication or distortion of myths of origin. The Administration recognizes as chiefs only those clan heads whose title is derived directly or indirectly from the Paramount Chief of the Mamprusi. Hence we find the Golibdaana of Tɛnzugu justifying his pretensions to recognized chiefship by concocting, for the benefit of a white inquirer, a story of how the founder of his lineage migrated thither from Mampurugu—a story which his enemies scoff at. The Sii Bɔyaraan, on the other hand, tries to strengthen his claim to precedence by alleging not only a Mampuru origin for his ancestors, but also that they were the very first to come and settle on the Hills.

These new myths are part of the defensive ideologies engendered by social conflict, but they follow the axioms of Tale thought. The Tallensi have no conception of a mythological or historical past of their society when people lived and behaved differently from to-day. The past is but an extension into the days of their forefathers of the life of to-day on the same rational plane of existence. Their history is to them not a sequence of events or a progression but a continuity. All that matters of the past, which lies beyond the span of man's recollection, lives on in the social structure, the ideology, the morality, and institutions of to-day. These are the palpable proofs of things that happened '*oh ho, ti banam ni ti yaanam ni*—in the days of our forefathers and ancestors'; one can infer from them what must have been the state of society in those far-off times. Conversely, the social arrangements which prevail to-day are valid, sensible, and appropriate not only because they achieve desired ends but also because *banam ni yaanam ndaa piil na*—the forefathers and ancestors

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

dimensions. The clan is also the region where a lineage's clanship ties have the maximum force; for, as we have seen, there are differences in the range and precision of the rights, obligations, and participation in the secular and ceremonial matters of common interest implied by the ties of clanship which a lineage has with other lineages.

A lineage's field of clanship is not homogeneous. As will become clearer when we have analysed one or two more chains of linked lineages, spatial distance and genealogical distance are the main factors upon which the incidence and variation of the rights and duties of clanship depend. The farther away a lineage lives from another with which it has ties of clanship, the less intercourse is there between their members and the less likely are they to co-operate in those situations and events which mobilize these ties. Again, the closer the genealogical links, actual, putative, or fictional, between two linked lineages the more regularly will they co-operate and the more effectively assert the rights and perform the duties of clanship.

The principles so far elicited have a general application throughout Taleland. But the clan of Mosuor biis is unique. The typical clan in Taleland is a single local unit of the composite kind. Mosuor biis are certainly the most numerous patrilineal descent group in Taleland.[1] It must not be forgotten that in addition to the four localized branches of the clan which form its recognized major subdivisions, there are the minor colonial offshoots.

The natives see no difficulty in explaining the numerical preponderance of Mosuor biis. It is, in their eyes, due simply to a fecundity greater than that of other lineages. Members of Mosuor biis themselves give this a mystical rationalization. They say that they are prolific because they all have but one religious cult, that of their ancestors, which binds them to one another in mutual amity and solidarity. In their cult of their ancestors each branch of Mosuor biis seeks not only its own increase and prosperity but the increase and prosperity of all its clan brethren as well. To do otherwise would be a sin inviting the wrath of the common ancestors of the whole clan. But in composite clans, they say, each component lineage has its own independent ancestral and other ritual cults. It is jealously concerned with its own increase and prosperity, even regarding it as an advantage if other maximal lineages of the same clan are diminished. Such an attitude brings down mystical retribution; for those who seek the ill of their fellow men are bound to suffer ill themselves.

These views are not accepted among members of composite clans, who consider their own cults to be no less founded on, and instrumental in

[162]

[1] To take a complete census of the members of Mosuor biis, even of the male members only, would be impossibly laborious and time-consuming for an anthropological field-worker limited to a short stay in the country. Sample censuses were made at Tongo and Sie. Going by these and by recent counts made throughout Taleland by the Administration of the taxable male population, I should estimate the male members of Mosuor biis (including accessory lineages) as not less than 2,000. The women are so scattered, owing to patrilocal marriage, that it is impossible to estimate their numbers. No other clan in Taleland can, I should judge, reckon more than half this number of male members.

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

forefathers in that way (*ti ku zaŋ ti bɔnam bah ŋwala*)'. Some of the younger men of Yapaas were merely being tiresome. 'You'll see', countered the man who had spoken earlier, sceptically, 'some day there will be a quarrel over something, the division of meat at a sacrifice, or the inheritance of a widow, or something of that sort, and then you people of Zubiuŋ will split up.'

Meanwhile, we continued to wait for the Yapaasdɛm, for the ritual could not be performed without the presence of their representatives. In due course they arrived. Far from expressing contrition, they excused themselves by accusing the others of having bungled the sequence of the rites. A violent argument followed, but one of the elders cut it short. No doubt, he said, the Yapaasdɛm preferred a different order of the rites. That was their affair. The senior lineages had no intention of copying them. To-day the ceremonies were *their* concern, and now that all the lineages were properly assembled they might as well get on with the business.

Linked Maximal Lineages and the Field of Clanship

Corresponding to this structural differentiation within the clan, each maximal lineage has its distinct field of clanship. One segment of Yakɔradɛm, known as Pulien biis, is an attached lineage descended from a 'sister's son' of the authentic lineage. Another segment (Zaŋgɔbɔg yidɛm) is an assimilated lineage, said to be of slave descent. Members of this segment are debarred from holding the tɛndaana-ship. Pulien biis have the right to hold the office, but mainly in a titular capacity, for they are barred from its most essential responsibilities. In other respects these accessory lineages have been fully absorbed by the authentic line of Yakɔradɛm, and participate in all the corporate activities of the latter.

The Yakɔradɛm have ties of clanship with Gbizug, which counts as the senior segment of Gbeog, and is bound to Gbeog proper by the usual ties of clanship. But there are no ties of clanship between Zubiuŋ-Yakɔra and Gbeog proper. They may not marry a daughter of Gbizug; they may and do marry Gbeog women, who would of course be barred by the rule of exogamy from marrying into Gbizug. Zubiuŋ-Yakɔra also have ties of clanship with Ba'at-Sakpar, one of the major segments of the clan of Ba'ari; but they have no ties of clanship with any of the other Ba'ari maximal lineages. Similarly, they have ties of clanship with Zoo-Yiraaŋ, but not with the Namoo lineage of Zoodɛm proper. The other two component maximal lineages of Zubiuŋ are excluded from this field of clanship. For instance, they can and do marry Gbizug, Ba'at-Sakpar, and Zoo-Yiraaŋ women.

These extra-clan ties of clanship are rationalized in various ways. Gbizug and Ba'at-Sakpar claim to be the consanguineous kin (*dɔŋam*) of Zubiuŋ-Yakɔra, because, as the myth of the primordial tɛndaanas relate, the founding ancestors of all three lineages were 'brothers'. The Zoo-Yiraaŋdɛm are claimed as kin (*dɔŋam*) of the latter because their founding ancestor is said to have been a 'sister's son' of Zubiuŋ-Yakɔra. It should be noted that such a remote cognatic link does not in every case establish ties of clanship. The same fiction is used to account for the existence of

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

attached lineages, as well as for certain ritual and political ties between some groups. Thus, one segment of Tongo has a special ritual role as intermediary in the politico-ritual relations of Tongo and Zoo, and this is rationalized by the same fiction; but it does not involve ties of clanship with Zoo.

There is a close parallelism between the inter-clan linkages we have described and the spatial relations of the groups concerned. Gbizugdɛm are the nearest non-Namoo neighbours of Zubiuŋ-Yakɔra on one side; Ba'ari is contiguous with them on the other side; and Zoo-Yiraaŋ live side by side with their clansfolk at Zubiuŋ-Yapaas. There is an asymmetry in these clanship ties which appears to be mirrored in the fictions accounting for them. Gbizug and Ba'at-Sakpar are linked by clanship ties in exactly the same way as they are linked with Zubiuŋ-Yakɔra, but neither has ties of clanship with Zoo-Yiraaŋ.

Zubiuŋ-Yakɔra has more frequent and closer relations and a stronger sense of fraternity with Gbizug than with its other two linked maximal lineages at Zoo and at Ba'ari. This is fostered by proximity and by the belief enshrined in their myth of origin. Thus, when a Zubiuŋ-Yakɔra tɛndaana dies and his funeral ceremonies are performed, the heads of all three linked maximal lineages have to send an obligatory contribution of porridge, specially prepared 'to set out for the dead (*zien kpiim la*)'. They act, then, in the same way as the other two Zubiuŋ lineages, which are also obliged to send this contribution. But Gbizugdɛm do more than make a merely formal acknowledgement of their ties with the dead man's lineage; they take part in the funeral to a much greater extent than Ba'at-Sakpar or Zoo-Yiraaŋ. Their representatives never fail to attend all the important ritual events of the funeral, whereas the representatives of the other two linked maximal lineages appear only at the exoteric public ceremonies, such as the final divination when the beer is distributed. The social relations of Gbizug with Zubiuŋ-Yakɔra give them a place, as it were, half-way between the other Zubiuŋ maximal lineages and the other two linked maximal lineages in point of intimacy and corporate cohesion. Every Yakɔra man knows the wives of the men of Gbizug almost as well as the wives of his own clansmen. He speaks of them all as his 'wives', for he has a right to inherit any of them if they remain widows. If he meets one of them by chance he will chaff her, as if she were a Zubiuŋ wife. Most of the wives of the men of Ba'at-Sakpar or Zoo-Yiraaŋ are quite unknown to him, though formally he has the same rights in respect of them.

The Gradation of Clanship Ties

What distinguishes the bonds of Zubiuŋ-Yakɔra with Gbizug from their apparently identical bonds with their clansmen of Zubiuŋ is this: the latter are bound to perform all the duties of close *sunzɔp*, the former are under the much more limited obligation of giving expression to their ties of clanship through one or two formal acts. The latter, for example, are obliged to attend and to conduct all the important rites of a Yakɔra tɛndaana's funeral, whereas Gbizugdɛm come voluntarily, and if they undertake any task do so out of courtesy and friendliness. Similarly, the

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

571 Hence, people connected in this way are careful not to ask each other
577 for things. In the hunt, if a member of one group kills an animal and any members of the other group happen to be on the spot, the slayer will not lay a hand on the kill until the latter have cut a portion for themselves.

765 Sometimes it happens that a great tragedy overwhelms a member of
571 one group and he abandons himself to grief, refusing food, drink, and
577 consolation. Then, as a last resort, his relatives send for the head of the lineage whose requests cannot be refused, to persuade the stricken man to face life again. This happened, for example, when Puyɛl of Wakii's child was accidentally burnt to death. He was prostrate with grief, and said that he wished to die. Thereupon his brothers sent for the Bɔyarna'ab of Gundaat, the clan to whose members Puyɛl's lineage must yield, and the Bɔyarna'ab persuaded him to accept food and water, a sign that he was ready to throw off his despair. 'It is a matter of our fathers and our ancestors', the Bɔyarna'ab declared when he told the story. 'He dare not refuse; I would call on the Earth, and my *bɔyar*, and our ancestors, to witness, and his house would be destroyed if he remained obstinate.' Elders of other Talis clans explained the inviolability of this bond in almost the same words. It rests upon religious sanctions, the cult of the Earth and the cult of the External *Bɔyar*, common to all the Talis.

The Rationalization of Clanship Ties

811 Tallensi have no explanation to offer for the joking partnership or the bond of privileged moral coercion between clans or lineages, though they regard them as being somehow connected with the network of clanship. 'It is a matter of our fathers and forefathers', is all that even the best informed elders have to say about these ties.

*618 Clanship ties, however, always have the warrant of dogma or myth, as
811 we have seen. It is worth while examining a few more instances.

Sometimes common agnatic ancestry is claimed, though no common ancestor can be cited by name or any point of convergence of the different genealogies suggested. This is the case with Yinduuri and Sii, for instance. Frequently the fiction of a cognatic link is used. Thus, in explanation of the clanship ties existing between Degal and Kpata'arna'ab yidɛm of Kpata'ar, it is said that the latter are the sororal nephews (*ahɔs*) of the former. The name of the Degal woman who is thus alleged to have been the progenitrix of the Kpata'ar lineage is unknown, and no Kpata'ar man would even speculate as to which of their ancestors might have been her husband. Similarly, Dakuor yidɛm of Bunkiuk are said to be the descendants of a sororal nephew of Kpata'arna'ab yidɛm with whom they have ties of clanship. The fictional character of this formula is revealed when we compare the neighbouring clan of Samiit. The people of Samiit say that their founding ancestor was a Wakii man (hence their ties of clanship with Wakii), who migrated to the top of the hills because he had by accident killed and eaten a python, which is a taboo at Wakii. After wandering about for some time, he found refuge with the people of Gundaat, one of whose daughters was later given to him as a wife. The people of Samiit are the posterity (*tu'u*) of this pair. Strictly speaking, therefore, the people of Samiit are the sororal nephews of Gundaat; and

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

618X
811

yet they have no ties of clanship with the latter. Questioned about this anomaly, Samiit elders brushed it aside coolly with the remark, 'That is a long time ago, so now we marry one another'. But this argument, which is also met with elsewhere, runs counter to the basic principle of Tale exogamy, that consanguinity, however remote, is always a bar to marriage, not to speak of its obvious contradiction of the explanation of the Degal-Kpata'ar and other similar clanship ties. The Samiit elders, characteristically, admit these logical contradictions, but remain indifferent to them. For the structural ties that constitute the field of clanship of a particular lineage are validated independently of those that constitute the field of clanship of any other lineage. Theory and myth are made to fit the facts of social structure. It is enough if the fictions and myths utilized to explain the different linkages of a particular maximal lineage are consistent with one another. The Samiit story, which is typical of many others, proves, incidentally, that the explanations alleged for present-day structural ties are often myths of origin. Even if a Talən killed a tabooed animal by accident, it would be unthinkable for him to cook and eat it; and if by some mischance he did commit this sacrilege, he would not flee his settlement on that account.

Owing to the dominance of genealogical relationships and the ideology of kinship in Tale social organization, most of the formulas accounting for the clanship ties of maximal lineages are couched in the idiom of kinship. But in many cases this is not so. We have already had instances where clanship ties are attributed to local coalescence; but there are cases in which this rationalization cannot work.

Take, for instance, Gundaat and Tamboog. These two adjacent maximal lineages are considered to be on an equal footing with the other clans of Tənzugu. But they are united by clanship ties as intimate as those that unite the component lineages of a single clan. Thus, as we have already noted, when either clan celebrates mortuary or funeral ceremonies, the ritual duties which normally devolve on close *sunzɔp* are undertaken by the other. When the placation gift (*sendaan*) is sent for a bride from one of these units, the live cock which forms part of it is always presented to the head of the other. This reciprocal privilege is usually confined to the components lineages of a single clan; and it is the same with political and economic activities in which co-operation is usually restricted to the clan. But according to their nebulous myths of origin, these two clans have a totally diverse ancestry. To explain their clanship ties the elders of these two clans fall back on an *a posteriori* argument which is common in similar circumstances all over the country. They say, 'We sacrifice together at a single shrine, so how can we marry one another? (*ti kab kaabət bayər dekɔ'la, ti le na ntuo ndi taaba?*)'. The implication here is that clanship ties are a consequence of 'sacrificing together'. This is inaccurate as a description of fact, but the formula draws attention to the most important overt factor of organization in the social structure of the Tallensi. We have met it already in our study of the Namoos and some of the Talis clans; but its remarkable elaboration among the latter deserves further attention.